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AUTHOR Aleman, Ana M. Martinez
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ABSTRACT

This paper addresses issues surrounding the ideal of community in American undergraduate education and the challenge of multiculturalism in the context of a feminist interpretation of the pragmatism of John Dewey. A contradictory relationship is seen to exist between higher education's definition of community and multiculturalism; and this paper's interpretation of Dewey is thought to resolve these contradictions. First, the paper discusses the rhetoric of community, especially its origins in nineteenth century Oxford (England), and the results of a year-long study in 1990 to redefine the ideal of community in higher education. Then the paper considers the challenges of multiculturalism, such as a perceived loss of shared values and community, and the response of higher education (desegregate the student body without substantive changes in curriculum, pedagogy, or the college mission). In contrast, viewed in the context of Dewey, multiculturalism becomes a method of thinking, "intelligent learning," which can unite rather than separate individuals, and would enable individuals to communicate sociocultural experiential facts so that all members of the college community can develop shared objectives. The paper concludes that Dewey would see multiculturalism as bringing to undergraduate education the opportunity to communicate, to find commonality, and to establish emergent communities. (Contains 49 footnotes.) (DB)

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DRAFT MANUSCRIPT

The Search for the Great Community:
The Multicultural Community and Its Problems

Ana M. Martínez Alemán

Associate Professor of Education

Grinnell College

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Purpose Statement and Rationale

American higher education finds itself in an era in which the growing diversity of its students and faculty, together with the rise of critical intellectual forces, have challenged the rhetoric of community. The legacy of an earlier humanistic and Protestant philosophy which sought to preserve and promote a "common culture," today's colleges and universities, despite the reality of a heterogeneous student body and faculty, still give credence to the ideal of "community" as a consequence of presumed shared and universal educational values. These values, believed constant, stable, and unbroken, today face the challenge of considerable intellectual and social diversity.

The purpose of this paper is to consider the ideal of community in American undergraduate education and the challenge of multiculturalism. This paper will grapple with what I contend is the contradictory relationship between higher education's definition of community and multiculturalism. Largely unchanged since the establishment of the colonial colleges, the communitarian ideal of today's colleges (and by extension, today's undergraduate university programs) appears at odds with the post-modern demands of multiculturalism. Instead, colleges and universities have engaged not in a revision of the ideal of community, but in an enumerative and assimilationist multiculturalism. Thus, many of the tensions brought to the curriculum and extra-curriculum by the politics of identity go un-reconciled on campus, and communality is never really secured.

How can America's colleges reconcile these tensions? It is the aim of this paper to introduce John Dewey's work as a possible means for the resolution of these tensions. For the purposes of this paper, I will consider the ideal of community specifically in the liberal arts college of today but add the caveat that because our modern day "multiversities" are a series of communities grounding undergraduate education in the tradition of liberal learning, they, too, can be served by this Deweyan resolution.

My analysis will utilize a feminist pragmatic perspective, one which reflects on the experiences of post-secondary communities in order to "resolve the problematic situations that arise within [these] particular experiences." Such reflection is characteristic of pragmatism and feminism, two philosophical projects which rely on historical and relational analyses. As Charlene Haddock Seigfried has pointed out, feminist and pragmatic philosophical reflection both understand that reflection begins with the examination of experience which is "irreducibly plural" and which specifically regards the diversity of relationality responsible for phenomena. Context driven, such an analysis can scrutinize and reconstitute alliances and associations because it critically examines the "operative structures of power". In this case, a feminist pragmatic consideration of the ideal of community can help us to better understand the relations of power which both inhibit and enhance communality, and provide possibilities for re-configuring the diversity of interests which prove problematic to communality on our college and university campuses.[1]

It is the objective of this paper, then, to theorize a relevant and effective understanding of community via a feminist appropriation of John Dewey's pragmatism. It is hoped that such theorizing will bring to higher education scholars and participants a means by which the social and political forces of the end of this century and the onset of the next--the rise in interdisciplinary studies and critical studies, the assaults on equity programs, and the increase in racial and ethnic minorities in higher education--can be effectively addressed and considered.

It is my view that if we were to understand and enact multiculturalism on our campuses in a Deweyan way, we would introduce a method of thinking or "intelligent learning"[2] which would make the ideal of community possible for institutions of higher learning. As a method of thinking and thus learning, Deweyan multiculturalism can serve as a means to a universality that is not characterized by hegemonic assimilation or stunted growth. Instead, such thinking would be, in

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[1] Charlene Haddock Seigfried, *Reweaving the Social Fabric: Pragmatism and Feminism* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), 37-9.

[2] John Dewey, *Democracy and Education* (New York: The Free Press, 1916), 153.

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true Deweyan fashion, the means to an end (community) which would continue to inform its means (multiculturalism). In this scheme, a community based on commonality and difference would emerge and evolve. Characteristically Deweyan, universality and difference would alter and transform each other, serving to promote the growth of the community. Thus, with each new student, new faculty, or new staff, a college community continues evolving.

Accounting for the Rhetoric of Community

In 1990 the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching published the results of a year-long study designed to re-define the ideal of community in higher education. Charged by college and university presidents to determine the ways in which a "renewal of community in higher learning" could be enacted given the "loss of community," a loss mainly attributed to an increasingly diverse student body and professoriat, and the curricular challenges of the last 25 years, the report proposed a set of communitarian principles that "every college and university should strive to be"[3]. These principles of community, however, were not derived from an explanation or re-defining of "community" and consequently did not alter the assumed nature of community in any significant way. As such, the report did not provide colleges with any real substantive means to address the challenges of these diverse cultural forces, forces which I will refer to as "multiculturalism". The Carnegie report, in my view, did not re-conceptualize the ideal community so that the post-modern goals of multiculturalism (the "appropriate recognition of human diversity and cultural complexity"[4]) and the goals of community (a shared desire for a universal understanding of civility via liberal education) would be compatible. In fact, the report did not give serious attention to its understanding of the objectives of multiculturalism in the

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[3]Ernest Boyer, "Campus Climate in the 1980s and 1990s" in Arthur Levine, ed. *Higher Learning in America, 1980-2000* (Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993).
[4]Martha C. Nussbaum, *Cultivating Humanity: A Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 110.
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academy, nor what "multiculturalism" did or did not mean. Additionally, the Carnegie principles maintained an ideal of community on American college campuses that could not reconcile the politics of the identity of the individual with her group affiliation, nor could it reconcile a vision of shared educational goals with the politics of difference.

Perhaps the absence of a consideration and contestation of the ideal of community can be attributed to what Bruce Kimball suggests is the modern American undergraduate college's direct lineage to the character and conception of residential colleges founded by "humanistic scholars, Protestant burghers, and Catholic orders precisely in order to provide a harboring community and to foster a communal sense of commitment to a moral and religious vision of liberal education." He continues by noting that today's colleges "represent the origin of the community ideal that is now so commonly invoked".[5]

What are the origins of the ideal of community assumed in the Carnegie report?

American undergraduate education began as "a community of masters and students,"[6] a community authored by its historical predecessor, the colonial hilltop college. A reproduction of England's Oxford, the liberal arts college of early America was dedicated to the formation of young men's character and piety. Culturally, ethnically and religiously homogeneous, these colleges provided Puritan men with membership in a community designed to strengthen the relationship between piety and the intellect and their commitment to religiously sanctioned paradigms of knowledge.[7] Despite the intellectual challenges that Enlightenment inspired revolutions in France and in the American colonies brought to the colonial colleges--intellectual challenges which sought to anchor collegiate curricula to rationalism--the American college retained its early Protestant humanistic character. The revivalism of the early nineteenth century

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[5]Bruce A. Kimball, in Nicholas H. Farnham and Adam Yarmolinsky (Eds.), *Rethinking Liberal Education* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 28-29.
[6]Clark Kerr, *The Uses of the University, Third Edition* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), 1.
[7]John S. Brubacher and Willis Rudy, *Higher Education in Transition: A History of American Colleges and Universities, Fourth Edition* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers).
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and the enduring mandatory chapel requirement at the nation's colleges underscored that the college was an institution in which men strengthened and re-committed themselves to their cultural and religious heritage, an institution in which learning and knowledge was the consequence of moral and religious precept, an institution in which the "confidence of the community" was maintained via religious fidelity.[8]

Having modeled themselves after a nineteenth century Oxford, the American colleges desired to preserve the 'timeless' concept of liberal education, an education which relied on cultural independence and insularity, and its logical outcome, social and intellectual unanimity. Buttressed by humanistic convictions that regarded knowledge as its own end and as a consequence of absolutes principles, the American college developed its character as a consequence of a desire to bequeath liberal culture to eligible young men. Guided by Cardinal Newman's doctrine of the value, purpose, and composition of liberal learning, and despite the challenges of the sciences (and later technology), the modern languages, and other studies at one time or another deemed "utilitarian", the American college curriculum was the vehicle through which institutions could cultivate a prescribed publicity. A cultural imperative, the cultivation of a public mind/public man became the mission of the American college, a mission characterized by the centrality of mind and the privileging of reason, the primacy of the individual, and the concern for axiomatic morality. The cultural knowledge that was to be realized by the students through residential liberal learning was based on the social and cognitive experiences sanctioned by liberal culture. Thus, liberal learning required identification with and internalization of a Protestant, Anglo-Saxon masculinity infused with Enlightenment ideas about self, individuation, and universal good. Further, college faculty, "largely oriented toward Anglo-European culture," tightly guarded the college mission and its intellectual center, the curriculum, from societal changes

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[8]Ibid., 42-45.

which challenged its collective identity.[9] Thus, the founding tenet of the American college--to perpetuate" Anglo-European assumptions about the universality of high culture"[10]--would eventually find itself wrestling with the forces of a growing and rapidly changing democracy which made pluralistic claims on the nature of the curriculum and the categorical imperatives of liberal education.

The Challenges of Multiculturalism

What are the challenges that America's pluralism and multiculturalism bring to the liberal educational core of the undergraduate college?

According to Arthur Levine, the aim of pluralism or the multiculturalism which emerged in as the 1990's response to the call for diversity is "to legitimize both the intellectual and emotional aspects of diverse cultures in academic and campus life in teaching, research, and service", thereby achieving "equity among diverse cultures and a symbiosis among them." Levine characterizes institutional responses to multiculturalism as "a tendency to think of diversity as a problem, rather than as an opportunity to shape an institution's future" and as a consequence, institutions have enacted policies which have sought to increase student representation and retention services for traditionally underrepresented racial and ethnic groups.[11] In other words, post-secondary institutions have understood the challenge of multiculturalism to be about additive inclusion, sum but no substance. With the increase in racial and ethnic diversity on colleges and universities, however, comes the disturbance of the historical common culture of the college. Thus, greater diversity begins to be understood as a loss of community, as a loss of once commonly shared and esteemed values. As the Carnegie Report implied, with the enumerative improvements in diversity

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[9]Frank Wong, "The Search for American Liberal Education", in Nicholas H. Farnham and Adam Yarmolinsky (Eds.), *Rethinking Liberal Education* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 65.

[10]Ibid., 69.

[11]Arthur Levine, "Diversity on Campus", in Arthur Levine (Ed.), *Higher Learning in America: 1980-2000* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983), 334.

came "a vocal questioning of a shared identity" and a "loss of community". The response by college and university presidents was to support administrative projects to "strengthen common purposes and shared experiences"[12] and not to engage in an assessment or re-consideration of institutional culture and mission.

What we have seen, then, on college campuses in the past 30 years is an attempt to address the call for diversity and then the fact of diversity by engaging in practices designed to first desegregate the student body and then to conduct business-as-usual, an additive policy with no changes to the curriculum, pedagogy, or to the college mission. With increased numbers of traditionally underrepresented groups now on and a part of the college enterprise, colleges attempt to live lives in states of pluralistic co-existence and assimilation. Integrating the new "diverse" populations into the common college culture has meant a "color-blind" attitude and conferring upon "diverse" students those values consistent with the normative culture. Colleges parley these positions and dispositions with the hope of an assimilationist end. When this goal is unachieved (usually a realization which occurs every time minority student groups stage a demonstration or make some public appeal for institutional change), colleges wave the flag of pluralism and embark on policies designed to secure an untroubled and unproblematic co-existence.[13]

Dewey's Multiculturalism

If we were to understand multiculturalism via a feminist pragmatic appropriation of Dewey, for example, we would see that it becomes the method for achieving the "great

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[12]Boyer, "Campus Climate in the 1980s and 1990s", 324-325

[13]For a more thorough consideration of American educational response to desegregation see H. A. Sagar and J. W. Schofield, "Integrating the Desegregated School: Problems and Possibilities" in D. E. Bartz and M. L. Maehr (Eds.), *Advances in Motivation and Achievement: The Effects of School Desegregation on Motivation and Achievement, Vol. 1* (Greenwich: JAI Press, 1964), 203-242.

[college]community."[14] If actuated in Deweyan fashion, this reconstruction of multiculturalism becomes a method of thinking necessary for the development of community. Seen as a method of "intelligent learning"[15], this multiculturalism would not isolate individuals, nor restrict their interaction with other individuals. Instead, as a freed intelligence, this multiculturalism creates a broader and more communicative environment which amplifies and alters experience, consequently informing consciousness. Unlike the multiculturalism practiced in many of our institutions, a multiculturalism in the Deweyan tradition can unite rather than separate individuals simply because the aim of building a college community is not antithetical to an individual's growth; it is attendant with an individual's growth. Individuals in a Deweyan multiculturalism would communicate meaning effectively, meaning which is the result of mindfulness reflective of experience.[16] Bodied and contextual, individuals can cohesively organize via communicated meanings and consequently develop shared objectives.

How would Dewey characterize this "multiculturalism" I have ascribed to him? At first blush I am sure that Dewey would find the term somewhat redundant; that "culture" (and by extension "culturalism") necessarily implies a multiplicity and a plurality. Culture, Dewey would remind us, is about a plurality which can continually augment and amplify "the range and accuracy" of the individual's knowledge. It is a plurality in the spirit, if not the material reality, of his "full and free" interactions needed for an effective and efficient social life.[17] Culture, and thus its needless post-modern incarnation, multiculturalism, is about the relationship between and among individuals; but these are relationships which broaden our outlook and which allow us to understand and critically interpret that which is outside our immediate view. Not about an "internal refinement of mind"[18] culture/multiculturalism is a sociality attributable to the conditions of the modern world, of the material lives of individuals, conditions of difference and ignorance. It

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[14] John Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1947).
[15] John Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 153.
[16] John Dewey, *Experience and Nature* (New York: Dover Publications, 1958), 295.
[17] John Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 83.
[18] Ibid., 123.

is the "complete development of personality"[19] in a time and place characterized by the historical realities of race and ethnicity, of political sentiment, of economic claims, and all other dispositions.

Thus, if social conditions are such that individuals and their contributions are judged unworthy, if barriers are constructed to prevent their full participation in all that society offers, then it can not be culture according to Dewey. Culture/multiculturalism must provide the opportunities and conditions for the development of each individual and for her communicative agency. Such agency, would argue Dewey, would enable her to think intelligently and thus grow "progressively", a growth that would bind her to community and consequently direct her endeavors toward social ends. Dewey's individual would be engaged in "whatever binds people together in cooperative human pursuits and results".[20] Though Dewey believed that these "cooperative human pursuits" were the effects of our sociability, and which would engender democracy sensibilities,[21] Dewey valued these pursuits precisely because they were thinking eventualities. Thinking, according to Dewey, requires making meaning from connections, requires engaging in the relations between and among phenomena. Thus, "cooperative human pursuits" are thinking opportunities in which individuals make sense of experiences from data supplied by others, and it is these data which allow us to question, formulate, or reshape our ideas.

It is also likely that Dewey would substitute the word "nationalism" for "multiculturalism", a term which like "democracy," had a peculiar American quality for Dewey. During the political and social turmoil of World War I, Dewey writes that the "good side" of nationalism is that which enables Americans to "think and feel in ideas broad enough to be inclusive of the purpose and happiness of all" and not the narrowness of mind that comes from a desire to separate

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[19] Ibid., 121.
[20] Ibid., 98.
[21] Dewey would remind us that the "development of distinctive capacities be afforded all" precisely because democracy demands it (*Democracy and Education*, 122.).
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ourselves from others. He reasons that we must understand that what is "basic" to American nationalism is that we are "interracial and international," that we are a culture of a "hyphenated character," and that from this spring opportunities for intelligent action. He warns that assimilationist policies which seek to narrow or diminish the heterogeneity of opportunities for thinking in America are disloyal to democratic ends, and as a result, argues for diversity as a compelling interest for democracy.[22] Thus, we can stipulate that Dewey argues for multiculturalism--or using his term "nationalism"--because it is an absolute necessity for the community that is America, and for and about the communities within America.

To be consistent with Dewey's construction of the individual and of individuality, Deweyan multiculturalism will require a view of the individual's self-realization or growth that implicates society, or more specifically, that is contingent on the degree to which individual interests and potentialities are positively engaged by others. Societies that regard "individual variations as precious" are societies which do not view variation as suspect and consequently do not suppress diversity. The "diverse gifts" that individuals bring to groups are regarded as favorable because they expand the capacities for individual growth, and consequently, the continued growth of the community itself.[23] As such, difference, diversity, variation, and dissimilarity are understood to be necessary for communal growth, for democratic growth. But difference must be effectively communicated if the "antagonistic sects and factions" that result from imposed communicative restraint can be avoided and democracy realized, according to Dewey. Individuals must think of democracy as "a personal way of life", writes Dewey, so that communication across differences can be effected. As he writes in 1939, "To cooperate by giving differences a chance to show themselves...is a means of enriching one's own life-experience, is inherent in the democratic personal way of life". Further, asserts Dewey, individuals must understand that they can not abandon this communicative responsibility by believing that it is the

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[22] John Dewey, "Nationalizing Education" in JoAnn Boydston (ed.) *John Dewey: The Middle Works, 1899-1924, Vol. 10* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1976), 202-210.
[23] John Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 296 - 305.
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responsibility of institutions to deliver communicative means. Institutions, Dewey reminds us, are not living organisms but are the "expressions, projections and extensions" of our "personal attitudes".[24] Thus, individuals must infuse institutions with democratic communication, they must shape institutional policy and practice that is consistent with democratic communication that engenders individual and communal growth.

But it is difference and variation as the consequences of culture, or as "the conditions of modern life, of daily life, of political and industrial life,"[25] and as such, the variance that individuals bring to new communities is not just about personality or other 'natural' dispositions. Differences are, Dewey would assert, simply the effects of living life as individualities impacted by policies and regimes of truth. Our lives are marked by what sets us apart from or makes us the same as others, by what makes us known 'to be' one thing or another. We are what others see us as; and in part we are the response to that treatment. Thus, the inscriptions of such conditions as gender and race, ethnicity and socio-economic class mark our individual identities in such a way that we internalize features of collective identities: how we understand ourselves to be "woman", to be "poor", to be "Black", to be "gay". This internalization is the outcome and outgrowth of complex cultural knowledge about ourselves and our identifications with communities. Using the language of Habermas, the "lifeworld" or the "totality of sociocultural facts" constructs and maintains identity,[26] so that the ideas that we have about ourselves and others will necessarily be dependent on how we interpret those facts, or in Dewey's language, how those facts are communicated to us, and the meaning which we derive from that communication.

Dewey's Multiculturalism as Pragmatic Thinking

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[24] John Dewey, "Creative Democracy: The Task Before Us" in JoAnn Boydston (ed.) *John Dewey: The Later Works, 1925-1953, Vol. 14* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1976), 226 - 228.

[25] John Dewey, "The Educational Situation"

[26] Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action, Vol. II, Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason*, translated by Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1987), 136.

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Dewey's multiculturalism, then, is about a communication of our socio-political facts that like thinking (Dewey would argue) can amend and elaborate knowledge and can transform "our convictions as to the state of things."[27] Because multiculturalism provides opportunities for learning, and because it broadens intelligence, Dewey would view multiculturalism as operationally critical and reflective, conditions he viewed necessary for thinking. Thinking, in Deweyan terms, is characterized by the same reliance on experience, reflection, and testimony, that is so fundamental to multiculturalism. Pragmatic thinking and multiculturalism are comprised of same essential conditions and achieve the very same ends.

For Dewey, let's remember, thinking is not that which is "automatic and unregulated".[28] Thinking requires reflection on the interconnectedness of events and phenomena, reflection that has come after a mindful inquiry of propositions. These propositions often rest on belief and opinion, or that which we have taken to be knowledge. Our "prejudices" are "prejudgments" based on belief are passive cognition that Dewey attributed to "laziness, inertia, custom, absence of courage and energy in investigation". Active and progressive, thinking must test the reliability of propositions by assessing the "quality of evidence" that is presented. We appraise evidence through a variety of measures, testing to see if the meaning we have attributed is significant, if it is justified.[29]

But we begin the inquiry from "perplexity, confusion, or doubt."[30] Thinking is brought about by our disbelief and distrust of the facts before us, or by our confusion and uncertainty. Dewey has us work our way out of confusion and uncertainty via a connection to our relevant experience or by way of "testimony". "Testimony" is the "material supplied from the experience of others" which in order to be helpful to our query must "enter into some existing system or organization of experience."[31] In other words, when others furnish us with information from

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[27] John Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 295.
[28] John Dewey, *How We Think* (New York: D. C. Heath & Co., 1933), 201.
[29] Ibid., 5-15.
[30] Ibid., 15.
[31] Ibid., 257-258.

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experience outside our ken, when they provide us with knowledge or beliefs which are unfamiliar and foreign to us, we must either make the connection to our own corresponding experience, or be able to make meaning within or through an accessible communicative system. Thus, thinking, according to Dewey, is a process through which we reflect on the socio-cultural facts of lives, our own and others'. More importantly, as a process derived from and bound to these socio-cultural facts, and to their critical evaluation, thinking becomes "a means to some end, good, or value beyond itself."[82] It takes on a pragmatic character through which knowledge is "revised and extended, and our convictions as to the state of things re-organized."[83] Through pragmatic thinking, we are able to examine what has happened and give meaning to "what is still going on" and "what is still unsettled".[84]

We are left, then, with an understanding of Deweyan multiculturalism as that process or means of thinking that will enable us to communicate the socio-cultural facts of our past and present experiences in such a way as to expand knowledge and in doing so, modify experiential conditions. In this way, multiculturalism becomes a means through which opportunities for learning are enlarged because we welcome the assertion and disclosure of unfamiliar experiences. Put another way, we welcome the unfamiliar and different as occasions to edify and enlighten the conditions of our experiential ignorance. And this will be the test for Dewey's multiculturalism in the college environment: the degree to which multiculturalism, if enacted in Deweyan ways, can the means through which individuals and groups can effectively communicate experiential facts so that all members of the college community can develop shared objectives.

Dewey's Multiculturalism and Community

In *The Public and Its Problems*, John Dewey set forth his vision of the "Great Community" by asserting that societies can be "cohesively organized" into communities. But even

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[82] Ibid., 223.
[83] John Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 295.
[84] Ibid., 341-342.

in democratic arrangements, individuals must do more than just associate in order to form communities. In Dewey's view, democratic societies must be organized in ways which allow individuals to develop and communicate commonly shared objectives. In order for societies (associated living) to develop into communities, individuals must have "a responsible share according to capacity in forming and directing the activities of the group" and must participate "according to the needs and values" which the group asserts. Groups, or in our case the members of college, must liberate the potentialities of its members, and must themselves interact "flexibly and fully" with other groups.[35]

On many of our post-secondary campuses, administration, faculty, and students reason that by increasing the diversity of the student body and the faculty the college will improve upon its communal properties. The rationale for diversity plans is often premised on the very idea that such additive measures can only enrich the existing "community" because more individual variety necessarily means more association between individuals, and that 'more association' necessarily means better association; and of course, 'better association' in turn leads to communal solidarity.

There is much that is faulty in this scheme. Increasing the number of minority faculty and students (additive difference) is merely an enumerative strategy and "no amount of aggregated collective action of itself constitutes a community"[36] according to Dewey. Difference must be meaningfully communicated if it is to be effectively understood, if it is to be of consequence for growth. Additive difference can not necessarily ensure the conditions necessary for individuals to engage in meaningful communication, a necessary criterion for community. Because colleges and universities increase student and faculty diversity, we believe that individuals will have "numerous and varied" experiences and "full and free" interactions across and within groups. But it is the quality of the intercommunication between groups (racial or cultural) that most determines whether or not groups (and individuals) ever reach a "common understanding" and can ever

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[35] John Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems*, 147.
[36] Ibid., 151.
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"regulate their specific activity" aimed at constructing mutually determined ends.[37] Thus, though increasing the representation of racial and ethnic minorities on campus can increase the *likelihood* that groups and individuals will associate, it does not guarantee effective communication and communality. Further, for undergraduate education tethered to the values of liberal education, this increase in plurality, though on the surface consonant with liberalism's democratic character, only serves to heighten the defense of liberal education precisely because it challenges its cultural insularity. But simply because these new college populations challenge liberal education's parochial character, it does not mean that liberal education is changed, that additive difference has triggered communicated difference. If anything, life on our college campuses suggest that increasing diversity simply highlights the lack of mutual intelligibility between groups and between individuals.

Perhaps the college's inability to effectively actuate multiculturalism has to do with its inability to 'see' students' experiential realities as opportunities for critical reflection, for liberal knowledge. Many leaders of liberal arts institutions reason that students (and faculty) are neutral intelligences, making them capable of amicable and sympathetic intellectual fireside chatting. Yet, the history of higher education has proven otherwise. For example, we have argued that women's entry into higher education would mean nothing more than a demographic change in the college, that it would mean nothing more than rendering dormitory urinals useless, but instead have found that nothing could be further from the truth.[38] That despite all that is done to assimilate the new and different populations of students, their cultural, social, economic, and sexual realities bring to the conversation knowledge and epistemological positions that are the very consequence of those realities, the effect of those experiences. For Dewey, this "consciousness" that is the result of being this organism "in nature" must be engaged in order to begin effective communication.[39] Through "testimony" and critical reflection, he would argue, undergraduate education can extend

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[37] John Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 83.

[38] The Virginia Military Institute and the Citadel as recent examples.

[39] John Dewey, *Experience and Nature* (New York: Dover Publications, 1958).

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the sharing of the facts of socio-cultural difference as the means of understanding the past and present, of constituting ideas, and to guide future actions. In such a communicative process, difference (multiculturalism) becomes the means if thinking and as a result, the possession of all parties.

I believe that Dewey would argue that the way to create the genuine exchange between experientially different individuals that is necessary for community is for liberal learning to appropriate a cross-cultural dialogue that is critically reflective of socio-cultural facts; in other words, to champion multiculturalism as a means of thinking. This exchange of socio-cultural facts, he would assert, must begin with subject matter--the curriculum--and continue with the development of mutually intelligible signifiers--communication. He would reason that the way to develop the commonality that is necessary for us to develop community on our college campuses (a community which he would argue can not happen automatically by virtue of mere association[40]) is for the curriculum to present students with analogous and/or relevant experiences (via texts, laboratory work, films, internships, foreign exchange, etc.) which prompt communication for all. Teachers are to require not the relativism of personal experience to dictate learning, but rather the dialogue that "draws out the ideas of students," and that "exposes myths and stereotypes to critical scrutiny."[41] What then has become familiar through inquiry and discriminating analysis can be "rationally or logically organized"[42] as knowledge.

Now conjointly invested in the examination and organization of knowledge (the college's curriculum and pedagogy), individuals can begin to stipulate ends, to discuss the objectives of their intellectual community, the aims of their college. Members of the college can engage in an active process of community building, a community which will always be emergent and never complete. As new members enter the communication, the communal properties are impacted in

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[40] John Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems*, 154.
[41] Jerry G. Gaff, "Beyond Politics: The Educational Issues Inherent in Multicultural Education", *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning*, Vol. 24 (1), January/February 1992, 32.
[42] John Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 184.
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one way or another, but most importantly, their impact is a progressive one. Communality continues evolving with each addition of difference or novelty. Brought into the dialogue by their desire to broaden and deepen their knowledge, and welcomed by other individuals who share the same purpose for themselves, new members become active participants in the development of shared ends.

Dewey was confident, and perhaps optimistic, that with effective multicultural communication individuals would develop a consciousness that would value and have "effective regard for whatever is distinctive and unique"[43] in each of us. Dewey felt certain that given the opportunity, individuals would welcome difference if they understood it to be necessary for their own self-realization. Dewey reasoned that to be "full and free", to wholly realize our individual potentialities, requires a widening of our life-experiences which frees us from "routine habits" and "the authoritative control of others."[44] Motivated by a desire to grow and an understanding that their growth is dependent on the growth of others, individuals embrace difference and variety because it signals an occasion for self-development, and by extension, becomes the primary source for communal growth. Members of the college community become effectively organized through a multicultural intelligence which allows them to define and communicate shared ends. Thinking via multiculturalism allows for the communication necessary to build communal ties.

But as I previously mentioned, all of this is premised on Dewey's confidence in individuals and in our ability to recognize that multiculturalism is a method of intelligence that can bring us to democratic social and intellectual ends. Had Dewey seriously considered the relations of socio-cultural power that govern our identities? our individualities? our very presence in institutions? Had Dewey examined what it would mean for those in authority to relinquish power? for the proponents of a Eurocentric canon to 'give way' to a multicultural curriculum? for literature professors to teach Carlos Fuentes and Sor Juana Inez de la Cruz alongside Hawthorne, Melville,

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[43] John Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems*, 151.
[44] John Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 152.

Emerson and Thoreau? Will the biologist re-conceptualize the scientific normative of "race" because she understands this to be about the expansion of biological knowledge?

My sense is that because Dewey's optimism about humanity was really about his faith in our "*distinctively* human function"[45], our capacity to be rational, and thus in our ability to "perceive the significance of the subject matter of a new experience.,"[46] that he will rely on our capacity for reason to direct our actions. He would submit that it is reason that will enable us to understand the connection between familiar and unfamiliar experiences, between accepted knowledge and novel explications.; that is reason that will enable us to welcome uncertainty and speculation, difference and modification. Consequently, these questions--these post-secondary educational realities--are about individuals choosing whether or not to act rationally regardless of their socio-cultural conditions. For the proponents of a Eurocentric canon to relinquish cultural and institutional power by transforming the curriculum is, for Dewey, simply about choosing reason over habit, growth over rigidity. If curricular change furthers thinking, enlarges knowledge, and is directed as progressive social ends, then the choice is an obvious one for Dewey.

But in reality our choices and consequent actions may not be so "reasonable". We may choose conformity for reasons other than Deweyan growth. We may dismiss the claims that multicultural thinking is the means to broader and greater intelligence and social good because as individuals our economic survival may require such compliance. But if Dewey understood "the business of education" to be to liberate and expand experience[47] and that "a progressive society counts individual variations as precious since it finds in them the means of its own growth,"[48] then it does seem that Dewey would believe that higher education is obliged to be rational, obliged to choose multiculturalism. Thus, it appears that for Dewey, multiculturalism is the only choice for

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[45] Ibid., 252.
[46] Ibid., 343.
[47] John Dewey, *How We Think*, 202.
[48] John Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 305.

the American college, the only choice for the attainment and growth of community in liberal education. Multiculturalism, as a means of thinking and a method of intelligence, brings to American undergraduate education the opportunity to communicate, to find commonality, to establish emergent communities. "Consciously sustained", these communities will be moral, according to Dewey, [49] a morality which is the aim of education.

For the American undergraduate college steeped in a tradition of exclusion, cultural insularity, and intellectual reticence, multiculturalism as a method of thinking may be the only pragmatic means for its post-modern survival. If the American college is to marshall the intellectual forces of the next century, it must break with those elements of its character that render it static and forever defending a reality of its past.

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[49] John Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems*, 143-184.